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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9219
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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES IMMEDIATE 0091
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RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA IMMEDIATE 2087
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 4478
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 0015
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STATE FOR SRAP HOLBROOKE, SCA/FO, SCA/A
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: UNAMA HEAD ASKS OSCE TO STRENGTHEN ELECTION SUPPORT

REF: KABUL 1044

[¶1](#). This is an action request. See paragraph 3.

[¶2](#). Kai Eide, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), has sent a letter on May 27, requesting that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) strengthen its election support team. Embassy received a copy of the letter, which is reprinted in full in paragraph [¶2](#). The OSCE has announced it will send a working-level technical support team, which would focus on thematic areas (reftel), rather than observers. This represents a decreased contribution compared to the 2004 and 2005 elections, when OSCE provided observer missions.

[¶3](#). Comment and action request: Ambassador Eide has asked all members of the international donor community support this matter through their diplomatic representatives in Vienna. In addition, he has specifically asked the United States to support his efforts through a letter from Ambassador Holbrooke to the OSCE. We recommend the U.S. join in supporting Eide's request. Not only would beefing up the OSCE technical mission be very helpful in strengthening the IEC's technical capacity, getting an OSCE observer mission would be an important addition to what is shaping up to be a far from robust international observer presence.

[¶4](#). Text of letter:

Her Excellency Ambassador Mara Marinaki
Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council
Permanent Representative of Greece to the OSCE
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
Heldenplatz
1010 Vienna
AUSTRIA

Dear Ambassador Marinaki,

Following PC.DEC/891 of 30 March 2009 and the OSCE/ODIHR - European Union Exploratory Mission to Afghanistan from 14-27 April 2009, ODIHR provided its finding and initial planning for an Election Support Team (EST) to Afghanistan for the Presidential and Provincial Council elections scheduled for 20 August 2009 (CIO.GAL/62/09)

UN Security Council resolution 1986 (2009) underscores the importance of the upcoming presidential and provincial council elections to Afghanistan's democratic development and calls for all efforts to be made to ensure the credibility, safety and security of the elections and for members of the

international community to provide the necessary assistance. In addition, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, in a letter to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office of 22 February 2009, invited the OSCE to support the elections. Afghanistan, as a Partner for Co-operation of the OSCE, has an important impact on the neighbouring regions of the OSCE. Ensuring the credibility of the 2009 elections is in the interest of the entire international community.

I would first like to thank your organization for its constant support to improving election processes in Afghanistan. The last two OSCE advisory missions sent in 2004 and 2005 played a very constructive role in identifying weaknesses and proposing ways to strengthen the elections.

As you know these elections will be the first organized entirely by the Afghan authorities. The United Nations are however providing substantial assistance. Technical preparations for the elections are proceeding well despite challenging circumstances. Recent exercises such as voter registration and candidate nomination were conducted successfully and with minimal security incidents. These exercises have also shown that there is strong interest amongst Afghans to participate in these elections.

Considering all the above, I was concerned to learn that ODIHR's recommendation for a OSCE's Electoral Support Team to Afghanistan in 2009 falls short of OSCE's support for previous Afghan elections in 2004 and 2005. According to

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ODIHR's initial planning, the Electoral Support Team for 2009 shall comprise twelve individuals which are to be based on Kabul and may conduct visits to the Provinces. In 2005, the OSCE's Election Support Team comprised some 32 individuals, sixteen of whom deployed to the field, providing additional ears and eyes on the ground and useful insights on how to improve the electoral process. The OSCE's election expertise is universally recognized: your Election Support Teams for the 2004 and 2005 elections contributed substantially to strengthening the credibility of the electoral process.

Ideally, the OSCE's contribution should be complementary to activities of other international actors. In this context, we appreciate the proposed focus on recommendations to facilitate long term institution building.

With due consideration to the challenges at hand, I would like to encourage you to reexamine the possibility of having a more robust OSCE contribution to the 2009 elections, including some presence at regional level.

Specifically, I would like to suggest the following concrete areas for additional OSCE support:

- 1) In the area of Domestic Observation, the OSCE could provide experts to advise FEFA on strengthening their capacity for gathering information and data compilation, thereby improving accuracy and integrity.

- 2) The results process is substantially different from prior elections, and will attract much scrutiny. Even with a limited presence at the regional level, OSCE experts could consider paying special attention to the count and tabulation procedure, including if feasible sampling of counts outside of Kabul.

- 3) In the area of Voter Registration, an independent assessment regarding longer term options for a combined civil and voter registry to be incorporated into operational planning for 2010 would be useful.

4) While 2010 planning for Capacity Building and support for the government is underway, OSCE experts could participate in a donors' group on broader issues of capacity building.

5) Finally, I suggest that one OSCE expert be embedded in each of the eight IEC Regional Centers, depending on the security situation, to gain a broader, national perspective and insight into all aspects of the process, and to interact directly with a variety of stakeholders, including domestic observers and candidate agents.

A strong female component within the OSCE contribution, as in previous years, including in leadership positions, would be most welcome.

Let me assure you that UNAMA is fully engaged in providing assistance and support to the 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council elections in Afghanistan. Over and above that engagement, we also need the support of other relevant institutions in ensuring, by joining efforts, that these elections meet Afghan expectations and aspirations.

Yours sincerely,

Kai Eide
Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in
Afghanistan
EIKENBERRY